

Senator Miner, Representative Harding, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Brookfield and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. CT Against Gun Violence is my employer.

We know access to a gun puts the suicidal risk higher than if there was no gun. Lessening access to guns makes it less likely the suicidal person will take action. If they do take another path to commit suicide, they may have second thoughts and change their minds since it's not as quick a death as a gunshot to the head. Also, they may be interrupted and saved by a loved one if they're trying other methods. There's no turning back when a gun is used for suicide.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. It offers a means of last resort, with due process protections, to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. It has been shown to prevent firearm suicide and stop mass shootings. It is time to strengthen the law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now.

Because there are often warning signs preceding violent or suicidal behavior this last-resort measure with due process protections is an effective tool for reducing gun violence. Because firearm suicide accounts for up to two-thirds of gun deaths and is the second leading cause of suicide in Connecticut, there is an urgent need to strengthen our ERPO law to help it save more lives.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joni Lowe
Brookfield, CT